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Adams. A Letter to Rev. Ezra S. Gannett

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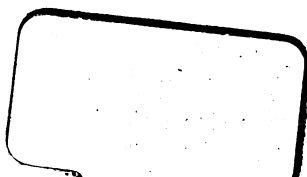
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A

LETTER

TO

REV. EZRA S. GANNETT,

OF BOSTON,

OCCASIONED BY HIS

TRACT ON ATONEMENT.

BY NEHEMIAH ADAMS,

PASTOR OF FIRST STREET CHURCH, BOSTON.

THIRD EDITION.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY TAPPAN & DENNET,

118 Washington Street.

1841.

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TO

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Dr. James C. Vane

L E T T E R.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

My attention has been drawn to your Tract, entitled "Atonement," recently published by the American Unitarian Association. Its object is to show that "the popular doctrine of the atonement is condemned by reason, contradicted by scripture, and fruitful of evils which every one must lament." You "hold it therefore to be a duty to renounce and to expose it." p. 30.

Your tract appears at a time when the community is specially interested in the subject of religion. Every denomination of Christians holding the Orthodox doctrine of the atonement, has lately had renewed evidence that faith in the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, is efficacious, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, in turning men from "darkness to marvellous light." Many of other denominations, are also led to serious inquiry upon the subject of religion, and therefore, the opportunity afforded by your tract, of exhibiting our views of what we consider a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, is gladly embraced.

As you have not attempted an abstruse, metaphysical discussion of the subject before us, I shall avail myself of your example in giving a popular form to the present remarks.

The doctrine generally known as the atonement, you labor, in your tract, to disprove, and in its place to establish something to which you give the venerable name of that article of faith. Though you say that the word *atonement* occurs but once in the New Testament, and then that it might have been otherwise translated, you are evi-

dently partial to the name; you affix it to your tract, and proceed to say, in the first sentence, "The scriptural doctrine of atonement is simple and intelligible."

But your readers are soon informed that the atonement taught in the Bible is nothing more than the at-one-ment of sinners with God. "It is the bringing together, the uniting, of those who had been separated." p. 3. You here resort to the old English use of the word *atone*, which in Chaucer, for example, is synonymous with *at-one*. The idea which is now universally excited by the word atonement, and which is associated with the use of the word in the Old Testament, you reject in this definition, and make the term signify nothing but harmony, reconciliation, at-one-ment. While the word certainly includes this idea, it now denotes, in its general acceptance, *the means* by which reconciliation was effected, viz. the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ. This you reject in your explanation of the term.

If the title of your tract, then, were printed *At-one-ment*, and the word had been thus designated in your pages, it would give a fair exposition of your belief. It is a matter of gratitude, however, that it still seems necessary to greet the popular ear with the word *atonement*; but whether it is altogether expedient for one who rejects the atonement, to call the system with which he strives to subvert it, by the same name, is worthy of consideration. Some may be led to think that you believe in that which they invariably associate with this familiar name, but which, in your view, "is irrational, unscriptural, and pernicious." In the use of this word under these circumstances, you are like a good man who should take an imported cask with a celebrated and favorite brand, and should offer his own mixture for sale in it, without removing the old stamp, because in his own opinion, his article is as good as that of the foreign house.

Some may think that these remarks are captious, and that we might with equal propriety object to your use of the word "Saviour," and "Christ," because you attach different meanings to them from us. The distinction between the two cases is obvious. Atonement, regeneration, election, and similar doctrinal words, have become technical terms; the associations of men with them are fixed; and hyphens, written in them, must be made audi-

ble, to destroy their present meaning. They who deny the things which these words confessedly denote in general usage, and who are seeking to subvert them, should, in common honesty, refrain from expressions which the multitude of the unreflecting and indiscriminating may interpret differently from the intended sense.

But waiving this, There are two things in your tract which it is my wish now to consider.

The first is, *You misunderstand, and consequently misrepresent, the Orthodox views of the atonement.*

The second is, *You assert that the doctrine of forgiveness through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, is "irrational, unscriptural and pernicious."*

It would have been gratifying if the only cause of difference between us had appeared from your tract to be, a misunderstanding of our views. But though you greatly misunderstand and misrepresent us, your objection to the atonement is grounded, for the most part, upon a principle in it which we do admit, and hold to be essential to salvation, viz. the vicarious nature of the sufferings and death of Christ.

I. I shall endeavor to show that *you misunderstand, and consequently misrepresent, the Orthodox views of the atonement.*

After stating your views of the scriptural doctrine of atonement, as teaching that "God is reconciling the world unto Himself through Jesus Christ,—by faith in Him as the way—the way of doctrine promulgated, and obedience exemplified, and that upon the sinner's return to God in this way, God ceases to impute his sins unto him,"—you proceed to say, this "is not the doctrine of the Christian church. Another doctrine of atonement prevails, in which God is the party reconciled." p. 6. "It teaches that the Father was persuaded or enabled, (it is of little importance which word we take,) to exercise His mercy by the interposition of His Son." p. 27. Similar representations occur throughout the tract, all tending to make the impression that, in our view, God was originally unmerciful, but was influenced by Christ to show us mercy. These representations are interwoven with a correct statement of our faith, viz. that we regard the death of Christ as available to procure the forgiveness of sin; but the effect of the misrepresentations is not destroyed by that

which is correct in your exposition of our belief. They rather serve to make the latter obnoxious; for you proceed to show from Scripture, that God needed not to be reconciled, and then the natural inference is, that the popular doctrine of atonement is false!

Though you say, p. 10, that you shall chiefly confine yourself to the consideration of "the idea" that the death of Christ is represented by the Orthodox writers as "efficacious to procure pardon for the penitent," you do not omit to dwell, with much emphasis, on the alleged fact, that we represent God as having been prevailed upon by Christ to show us mercy. That you truly believe this to be a part of our faith appears not only from the sentences above quoted, but from the 20th page of your tract, where you endeavor to show, that the atonement as we teach it, is unscriptural, and then you say, "the Bible abounds with assurances of the placability of God. Almost every page contains, and some pages are written over with, the evidences of his willingness to forgive the penitent;"—as though we did not believe and teach this,—and leaving the reader to infer that our views of the original feelings of God towards men, before Christ changed them, were those of unmingled anger. Others have chosen to express our supposed views of the matter by saying, that in our opinion, Christ bared his innocent head, and ran in between the Father and rebel men, beseeching Him to spare them, and offering to take the Father's wrath upon himself.

It would be an endless task to consider the various expressions and representations which particular believers in the atonement have used in speaking of the feelings of God towards man, and the influence of Christ in procuring pardon for us. But there are two writers who have probably used expressions upon the subject as obnoxious to the unbelievers in the doctrine as any that have ever written. I refer to CALVIN and WATTS.

Calvin speaks of Christ as having "appeased the Father's wrath," "assuaged His anger," "reconciled God," "satisfied and atoned him." Probably no expressions have ever been used by a believer in the atonement that could be more obnoxious than these to one who disbelieves the doctrine. I say this, because I wish to quote the strongest expressions of the kind, and to represent the

terms in question, for the sake of argument, in the most unfavorable light. But Dr. Watts "is very bold and saith,"

"Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood
That calmed his frowning face ;
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace." Hymn 108. II.

"'Father,' he cries, 'forgive their sins,
For I myself have died ;—
And then he shows his open'd veins,
And pleads his wounded side." Hymn 12. II.

"'Tis by the merit of thy death
The Father smiles again ;
'Tis by thine interceding breath
The Spirit dwells with men." Hymn 148. II.

I propose now to inquire if Calvin and Dr. Watts believed that God was indisposed to mercy till Christ changed his disposition ; whether He was angry, sullen, revengeful, implacable, till Christ represented to Him that he himself would bear the punishment of sinners, provided God would accept his sufferings and be satisfied. In other words, What were Calvin's and Watts's views of the original feelings of God towards our race ?

I quote first from CALVIN. (Institutes, Book II. xviii. 2.)

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.' We see that the love of God holds the first place as the supreme and original cause," (of divine grace.) "'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' These words clearly demonstrate that to remove every obstacle in the way of exercising his love toward us, God appointed a method of reconciliation in Christ."

Again:—"We are informed that Christ is particularly appointed of God for the relief of miserable sinners."—B. II. xii. 4.

Again:—"Therefore the most merciful God, when he determined on our redemption, became himself our Redeemer."—Id.

Once more:—"The love of God the Father precedes our reconciliation in Christ ; or rather, it is because he first loves us, that he afterward reconciles us to himself."—Book II. xvi. 3.

The quotations might be multiplied indefinitely, but further passages could not strengthen the impression which the preceding expressions give us, that Calvin considered redemption as beginning with the Father, and that Christ did not change the disposition and feelings of God toward us.

Let us examine Dr. Watts on this point. It is, indeed, almost unnecessary; for you have more hymns by Dr. Watts, in your Psalmody, on the attributes and providence of God, than from any other writer. In the twenty-ninth edition of a Unitarian hymn-book published in this city, I find that of ninety-four hymns on the above topics, thirty-four are from Watts.* The man that supplies us with so many devotional feelings and expressions in celebrating the *goodness* of God, cannot surely be inconsistent with himself in his other hymns. But here are some which have no place in the collection to which I refer.

"I give immortal praise,
To God the Father's love,
For all my comforts here,
And better hopes above.
He sent his own eternal Son
To die for sins which man had done."

Hymn 38. III.

"Such was the pity of our God,
He loved the race of men so well,
He sent his Son to bear our load
Of sins, and save our souls from hell."

100. B. I.

"But when we view thy strange design,
To save rebellious worms,
Where vengeance and compassion join
In their divinest forms ;—

Here the whole Deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess,
Which of the glories brightest shone,
The justice or the grace."

Worcester's Watts, 29th Sel.

* And the rest of them, with the exception of a very few, are from known Orthodox Christians.

"Let God the *Father* live
 Forever on our tongues;
 Sinners from *his first* love derive
 The ground of all their songs."

Hymn 28. III.

In view of these stanzas, can any candid man believe that Dr. Watts intended, in any of his hymns, to teach that Christ changed the Father's disposition toward us? But if he did not intend this, we naturally ask how it was that "Christ calmed his frowning face," "and turned his wrath to grace?" Moreover, if *Calvin* did not believe this, what does he mean by the words, "assuaged the Father's anger," "turned away his wrath," "pacified," "reconciled him?"

Calvin was sensible of the apparent inconsistency between these two classes of expressions, and accordingly we have his exposition and reconciliation of them in the most full and explicit manner. As no writer has ever expressed the same thing more clearly, and as the point is one of great practical importance, I shall give a large quotation.

In his *Institutes*, Book II. cxvi. 1, 2, he says,

"No man can descend into himself and seriously consider his own character, without perceiving that God is angry with him and hostile to him, and consequently he must find himself under a necessity of anxiously seeking some way to appease him, which can never be done without a satisfaction. For sinners, till they be delivered from guilt, are always subject to the wrath and malediction of God, who, being a righteous Judge, never suffers his law to be violated with impunity, but stands prepared to avenge it."

"Before we proceed any farther, let us examine by the way how it could be consistent, that God, who prevents us with his mercy, should be our enemy, till he was reconciled to us by Christ. For how could he have given us a special pledge in his only begotten Son, if he had not previously embraced us in his gratuitous favor? As there is some appearance of contradiction, therefore, in this representation, I shall solve the difficulty."

"We are instructed by the sacred doctrine, that irrespective of Christ, we may contemplate God as incensed against us, and his hand armed for our destruction, and that we may embrace his benevolence and paternal love only in Christ."

"Now though this is expressed according to the weakness

of our capacity, yet it is strictly true. For God, who is the perfection of righteousness, cannot love iniquity, which he beholds in us all. We all, therefore, have in us that which deserves God's hatred. Wherefore, in respect of our corrupt nature and the succeeding depravity of our lives, we are all really offensive to God, guilty in his sight, and born to the damnation of hell. But because the Lord will not lose in us that which is his own, he yet discovers something that his goodness may love. For notwithstanding we are sinners through our own fault, yet we are still his creatures; notwithstanding we have brought death upon ourselves, yet he had created us for life. Thus, by a pure and gratuitous love toward us, he is excited to receive us into favor. But to remove all occasion of enmity, and to reconcile us completely to himself, he abolishes all our guilt, by the expiation exhibited in the death of Christ, that we, who before were polluted and impure, may appear righteous and holy in his sight.

"The love of God the Father, therefore, precedes our reconciliation in Christ; or, rather, it is because he first loves, that he afterwards reconciles us to himself.

"This doctrine is clear and consistent with the Scripture, and admirably reconciles the different passages, where it is said, that God manifested his love to us by the gift of his only begotten Son, and yet that he was our enemy till he was reconciled by the death of Christ."

A passage from the writings of Augustine, quoted by Calvin, expressly maintains the same.

"The love of God," Augustine says, "is incomprehensible and immutable. For he did not begin to love us when we were reconciled to him by the blood of his Son, but he loved us before the creation of the world, that we might be his children, together with his only begotten Son, even before we had any existence. Therefore our reconciliation by the death of Christ must not be understood as if he reconciled us to God, that God might begin to love those whom he had before hated; but we are reconciled to him who already loved us, but with whom we are at enmity on account of sins. And whether my assertion be true, let the Apostle attest. 'God,' says he, 'commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' He loved us, therefore, even when we were in the exercise of enmity against him, and engaged in the practice of iniquity. Wherefore in a wonderful and divine manner, he both hated and loved us at the same time. He hated us as being different from what he had made us; but as our iniquity had not entirely destroyed his work in us, he could at the same time in every

one of us hate what we had done, and love what proceeded from himself."

Whether these representations are according to Scripture, is another question, which will presently be considered; but the foregoing words of Calvin and Augustine clearly show two things: First, that in their opinion, God was moved by his own original compassion to provide a Saviour; and Secondly, That, at the same time, in the opinion of these men, it accords with Scripture to represent Christ as, in some sense, the procuring cause of our salvation.

Now if any one makes objection to the expressions of Calvin and Watts respecting the influence of Christ in obtaining forgiveness for us, as inconsistent with Scripture, let him consider such passages as these:

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

If "believing on the Son" of God is the means of avoiding "the wrath of God," of what importance is it whether we say that the wrath of God is *removed*, or *pacified*, or *calmed*, or *assuaged*?

Again. There are passages of Scripture which represent Christ as *offering* for us, *interceding* for us, before God. Heb. ix. 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit *offered* himself without spot to God, purge," &c. Heb. vii. 25. "He ever liveth to make *intercession* for them."

No expressions of Calvin or Watts, or of any other Orthodox writer, represent in bolder terms than these the influence of Christ in procuring pardon for us.

Again. "It pleased the Father—*having made peace* by the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." The Father is here represented as first *making peace* between himself and sinners, and then as applying the reconciliation. If so, is it altogether unwarranted for a poet to dramatize the subject and represent Christ, like the ancient High Priest, as "sprinkling the burning throne," and "calming the face of Deity," especially when the general tenor of his hymns upon the atonement is that of praise to the Father's love?

I do not plead for the use of these expressions, but

assume the ground that they are defensible. One more class of passages will illustrate this: Christ is spoken of in the New Testament as a *propitiation*. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." But who needed to be made *propitious*? Where is the propriety of this scriptural expression, when the Bible itself tells us that "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us?" How, then, could Christ be in any sense a *propitiation*? Calvin has noticed this difficulty, and has given us his explanation of it, viz. "Till Christ relieves us by his death, we are not freed from that iniquity which deserves the indignation of God, and is accursed and condemned in his sight; we have not a complete and solid union with God till we are united to Him by Christ." "If we would assure ourselves that God is pacified or propitious to us, we must fix our eyes and hearts on Christ alone, since it is by him only that we really obtain the non-imputation of sins, the imputation of which is connected with the divine wrath."

From what has been said (and much to the same effect might be added) it appears

1. That Calvin and Watts believe and teach that Redemption began with the Father, and is an illustration of his original, unconstrained compassion towards man.

2. That since God is said to have given his Son to be the propitiation for sins, and to have made peace through the blood of his cross, it is not inconsistent, in the view of these writers, to represent Christ as "reconciling," "assuaging," "pacifying," the Deity, these expressions having reference only to the effect of the Saviour's sufferings and death, appointed by the Father, in preparing the way for the forgiveness of our sins.

It is needless to quote other Orthodox writers in confirmation of these views. I will only add, that if you can find one Orthodox writer of good repute, who maintains that Christ originally changed the disposition of God towards men, or whose representations of Christ as having "reconciled" the Father, can be fairly understood in any other sense than that of result and effect, rather than of original cause, you will find one whom Orthodox Christians will unite to condemn, as, in that respect, heretical.

To give a full view of the Orthodox belief on this subject as we find it in standard theological writers, it would be necessary to say something of the Covenant of Redemption, so called, which they represent to have been made, from eternity, between the Father and the Son. I allude to this only to say that Orthodox Divines regard the love of the Son towards man as being coeval with that of the Father, so that when it is said that Redemption began with the Father, it is not meant that his love to man preceded the love of the Son towards us, but that it had no cause or motive out of his own infinite compassion.

It is not true, therefore, my dear sir, that Orthodox divines believe that God was reconciled to us by Christ in the sense in which you have represented it. They expressly teach that "God loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," and that in order to remove every obstacle from the way of his love to us, He instituted the propitiation of Christ. By reconciling God to us, any one who reads their writings may see, they mean, that Christ by God's appointment, did that, which, in the view of God, made it consistent for God to remit the everlasting wrath which is due to sin. So far from representing this as a change of God's original disposition towards man, by Christ, they unite to show that it affords the highest possible proof of the love of God, that He was willing to do so much in order to save men from the natural consequences of their transgressions.

Though it was desirable to correct your representations of the Orthodox views of the atonement, so far as they concern the original feelings of God towards man, and to show that while God could have no complacency in us as sinners, He still had infinite compassion and good will towards us, this is by no means the chief object of this letter.

II. I shall consider your assertion that '*the doctrine of atonement through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is "irrational, unscriptural and pernicious."*'

That there may be no doubt what views of the atonement you regard in this light, I quote several sentences from your tract.

"The notion that God could not, or would not, have forgiven the sinner upon the most complete repentance, if Christ

had not died, so as to render it possible or proper for the heavenly Father to forgive—may be found in almost every system of Christian theology—and infuses into them all the leaven of corruption.” p. 7.

“In all these exhibitions of the doctrine, we observe the same idea constituting the corner stone—the idea that the death of Christ was efficacious to procure pardon for the penitent.” p. 9.

“Believing that it is a grievous error,—I cannot but desire to produce in other minds my own persuasion, that the notion of the availableness of the death of Christ to procure pardon in some other way than by leading the sinner to repentance, is irrational, unscriptural and pernicious.” p. 10.

“I consider the popular doctrine of the atonement, under whatever modification it may be held, so false and injurious, that I must utter the straight-forward language of my soul on the subject. I therefore repeat the positions that the common views of this subject are irrational, unscriptural, and pernicious.” p. 10.

You will not desire that any should apologize for, and explain, this language, by saying that you misunderstood Orthodox sentiments, and that it is only such extravagant views of the atonement as many Orthodox Christians themselves consider erroneous, that you reject. You do indeed enumerate the various theories of atonement which various writers have proposed and portions of the Christian church have adopted, and express your abhorrence of them. You say, p. 8,

“In the extravagance of dogma to which Calvinism has been pushed, the death of Christ has been represented as an equivalent for the punishment of the elect; or still worse, as the infliction upon the Redeemer of an amount of suffering equal to that which they must have endured, or worse still, (if worse can be,) as the actual experience by our Lord of the punishment, as well as a transfer to him of the guilt of those to whom mercy should be extended.”

If, by ‘the elect,’ you mean, *the elect alone*, you are aware that one may reject each and all of these views or theories of atonement, and still believe in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the sins of men. So that you say,

“I consider the popular doctrine of atonement, under whatever modification it may be held, so long as its fundamental principle remains—false and injurious.” p. 11.

That we may be in no possible doubt that the plain and simple idea of trusting in the sacrifice of Christ for pardon is the object of your assault, we have, pp. 28, 29, of your tract, the following passage :

“ The conscience-stricken sinner makes Christ his refuge, as if the mercy of God were not large enough to overshadow him. The humble disciple casts himself upon the sacrifice of Christ, as if its whole value did not consist in the persuasion which it utters to submit the soul to God. The dying believer leans on the ‘ merits of Christ ’ as he has been taught to style services which are sadly misrepresented by such a term, and when pointed to the mercy of God, feebly reiterates that he trusts in his Saviour. To me language of this kind is indescribably painful. The merits of Christ ! where could such language have been learned ? ”

The faith which leads to such views and exercises, it is the object of your tract to show, is “ irrational, unscriptural and pernicious.”

Your first argument is thus proposed :

The imputation of such efficacy (to the sufferings and death of Christ in procuring the pardon of sins) is “ *irrational* because it is needless.” p. 12.

It is difficult to suppress a degree of surprise which arises in reading this proposition. That your argument against redemption by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ should begin with assuming the whole question in debate, is certainly remarkable. How can we know what is needful or needless for man in being reconciled to God, before we examine the Bible ? To this it would seem your first appeal should have been made. But waving this, let us see in what way you show that vicarious sacrifice is needless.

“ If forgiveness could be obtained on repentance,—then to consider the death of Christ indispensable to this end is to require what is not wanted. Now that repentance is by itself available to this result, may be argued,” &c. p. 12.

Here, the question, whether repentance is sufficient to procure forgiveness, is maintained in the affirmative, and then you ask, if this be so, what need is there of any thing more in bringing man to God ?

I will take the argument precisely in the shape in which it is presented, which is this : The doctrine of

pardon through the sacrifice of Christ is irrational, First, Because repentance of itself is sufficient to procure forgiveness.

In reply to this I would endeavor to show that repentance, of itself, is not sufficient to obtain forgiveness.

(1.) *Repentance does not fulfil the requirements of the law by the subsequent perfect obedience of the sinner.*

There are instances of transgression amongst men where repentance secures full obedience. A penitent and forgiven child may never repeat his offence. He who is penitent for his injury of his fellow man, may ever after fulfil all his duty towards him. Repentance, in such cases, may be sufficient to prevent transgression. "But how shall man be just with God? How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" One must have limited views of the nature of sin, of the spirituality and extent of the law of God, who thinks that repentance can fulfil the requirements of God. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." "The word of God—pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is impossible for repentance to produce such an effect upon our hearts as to make them in perfect accordance with the requirements of God. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." The effects of repentance as you, my dear sir, represent them, are imaginary. You say, "The sinner, by becoming obedient, fulfils the design of the government under which he lives." "By accepting the obedience of the contrite offender, it accomplishes its end." I ask, what kind of obedience to a State or King would that be which should be violated as many times every day as we break the law of God? "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" If repentance restored us to perfect obedience, it would still be easy to show, from Scripture and from analogy, that it does not, and cannot, make reparation for the sins that are past. Granting that repentance changes the ruling purpose of the mind, and makes us "consent unto the law that it is good," it leaves us with "another law in our members warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity." What kind of law and justice must that be which requires perfection, and then is satisfied with such obedience as we render? A father may

obtain perfect obedience from his child, and a king from his subject, but the law of God cannot secure perfect obedience from us through repentance. While God requires repentance as a condition of pardon, the law of God must "accomplish its end," as you justly express it, in some other way. See Rom. x. 4 ; viii. 3, 4.

(2.) *Repentance of itself is not sufficient to obtain forgiveness, because it is not accompanied with a sense of reconciliation with God.*

I refer for proof of this to the history of our race. The desire for something more than repentance to satisfy conscience and to be at peace with God, is universal. The feeling of man in all ages of the world has been, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The guilty conscience every where cries for blood. 'There is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard.'*

It may be said, this is superstition; and that enlightened views of God will correct the feeling. Did God correct it, when he called Israel to be his peculiar people? For what purpose were the High Priest and the blood of atonement, and the sin offering appointed, if repentance could satisfy the guilty conscience!

Look at the Christian church in all periods of its existence. Christians have not been satisfied with mere repentance, but have added "the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," as their hope of pardon. And yet they had the parable of the prodigal son, detailing to them the way of a sinner's return to God, and the willingness of God to pardon a penitent sinner; and no mention of atonement occurs in that parable! Yet the sufferings and death of Christ, have been, with Christians, the ground of reliance on the mercy of God in all generations of the Church. When they read, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, *now to appear in the presence of God for us.* Nor yet that he should *offer himself* often, as the

* Bishop Butler says, (Analogy, Part ii. chap. v. 4.) "Though the efficacy of repentance alone to prevent what mankind had rendered themselves obnoxious to, and recover what they had forfeited, is now insisted upon, in *opposition to Christianity*; yet, by the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices over the heathen world, this notion of repentance alone being sufficient to expiate guilt, appears to be contrary to the general sense of mankind."

high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of *others*. For then must he often have *suffered* since the foundation of the world, but now in the end of the world hath he appeared *to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*;"—when they read this, I say, (Heb. ix. 24—26.) they still believe, also, in the indispensable necessity of *repentance*, though not a word is said about it in this passage.

At the present day, as heretofore, ministers cannot satisfy those who cry, Sirs, what must I do to be saved, unless they tell them, with the Apostles, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. If we direct them merely to repent and live a better life, they will go to those who preach atonement in the common way, and learn the mysterious influence of faith in redeeming blood. It is found necessary by some to persuade the awakened, that they believe, substantially, in atonement, though all that they mean by it may be, that "Christ was the symbol and pledge of the Father's love." The necessity is felt of inventing something that will make the anxious and indiscriminating sinner feel that they hold to something more than his own merits as the ground of acceptance with God. Many who hate and reject the doctrine of atonement for sin, clothe themselves with something as much like it as possible, when they approach the trembling sinner; and remind one of Jacob, who put on the skins of beasts to meet the inquiring touch of his father's hand, and make him think he was the elder son.

The desire for something more than repentance to reconcile us to God, is not peculiar to those who have always sat under evangelical ministrations. Individuals of all religious persuasions, and infidels who have been awakened either by a deficiency in the preaching to which they have been accustomed, or in private, and without external means, have indicated the same instinctive desire for something more than repentance to secure peace with God. The appeal may with confidence be made to the history of the human race, whether repentance or reformation has been found sufficient to reconcile the sinner to God. What success awaits your system in future, my dear sir, we will not say: but if it be, as you think, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," it is singular that it

has given no more evidence of its power to satisfy the human conscience, when convinced of sin.

(3.) *The doctrine of salvation by repentance alone, gives us melancholy views of heaven.*

After speaking of the power of repentance to bring the sinner to God, you find it necessary to caution your readers against erroneous views of forgiveness, and intimate that such views are the support of false views of the atonement. Then you compare the redeemed in the future world, to the reformed sensualist and dishonest man here, and say,

"In the future world, disadvantage will long hang about him who walked in the paths of sin, however deep may have been his repentance, and the fruit of his error be perhaps the everlasting security of his virtue." p. 13.

Alas! for the weary and heavy-laden sinner, if the fruits of his sin are thus to follow him, and remnants of his chain to hang about him forever. We have supposed, that in heaven the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. We have dwelt with joy and hope on the promise, that there shall be no more *curse* in heaven, neither sorrow nor crying, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. We have supposed that freedom from the consequences of sin, as well as from sin itself, was intended in what is said of the redeemed: "They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." That memory will remain in heaven and bring the scenes of past transgression to mind, we cannot doubt. But as salvation, in our view, will, in every instance, be undeserved, and will result entirely from the infinite grace of God through the redemption of Christ, we do not believe that the recollection of sin will have the effect which you impute to it, but will strangely lead to songs of praise for the love that triumphed over so great unworthiness. It may be said, that this affords encouragement to sin, seeing that the grace of God and its consequent praise will be in proportion to our guilt. He that continues thus in sin, that grace may abound, plainly shows that he has no grace in him. But still, where sin hath abounded, grace will much more abound. We believe that one object of emulation in heaven will be to exalt the Saviour's grace, and therefore the full confession

of sin, in all its aggravated forms, so far from being a source of shame and pain, will place the chief of sinners amongst the happiest of the redeemed. "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." How can recollections of neglected duties cease to trouble the spirit; and "God wipe away all tears from our eyes," except by some powerful affection of the soul, that shall absorb these recollections? We believe that the 'blood of the Lamb' will make the 'robes' of sinners 'white;' that the feelings excited by being saved through infinite grace, will overcome every painful emotion in the remembrance of sin.

Upon your system, you can take no such view of heaven. A retributive penalty for past transgression must haunt the penitent forever. He will never be "redeemed from the curse of the law"! Heaven will be a pool of Bethesda with "a great number of impotent folk." Recollections of evil, consequences of sin, will frequently cloud the brow and check the song, of the redeemed. This view of Heaven comes from rejecting the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and of atoning blood. The sinner is his own Redeemer. All the sins which he can wipe out of his conscience, he is welcome to remove. All the good which he can form in himself he may acquire; and when all is done, he must, in a measure, eat the fruit of his own way and be filled with his own devices. Such, my dear sir, is not the heaven which Calvinism, "gloomy" as it seems to you, opens to its followers. True or false, our views of heaven are far more cheerful than these. To us, "the LAMB is the light thereof."

Your second proof, that the doctrine of forgiveness through the death of Christ, is *irrational*, is, *Because it can be maintained only on an unsound conception of the divine government.* p. 14.

"The law of man does not contemplate pardon as one of the expressions of its authority; the law of heaven does. Again, human government does not consider repentance a reason for receiving the offender into its favor, because it cannot judge of the sincerity or depth of the repentance; the eye of God penetrates the heart and scans the future, and he knows whether the contrition that supplicates pardon, be genuine. It may, therefore, be both just and safe, humanly speaking, for the Omniscient One to forgive his creatures,

though it might be neither prudent nor right for a human government, to extend pardon to its subjects." p. 15.

This reasoning needs, amongst other things equally important, that one thing should be shown, viz.: that repentance secures full and perfect obedience. We know that this is not the case. If a man repents of covetous desires, envy, irritability, discontent, revengeful feelings, inordinate affections, and "the eye of God," which penetrates the heart," sees him to be sincere, will the man thenceforth be wholly free from the same transgressions? Your answer will probably be, No; but still God will make sincere repentance, watchful endeavors against sin, even though they may fail to prevent it, the ground of pardon.*

It seems to me, my dear sir, that the method of forgiveness you propose, is "irrational." It is inconsistent with human ideas of justice. What analogy is there in creation, that illustrates, what innate ideas in the human mind which justify, such a method of forgiveness? Take that remarkable reply of Christ to Peter's question, "Lord, how many times shall my brother repent, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, till seven times, but, till seventy times seven." Each of these seventy times seven pardons would be granted on the conviction that the offender would do so no more. But suppose that Peter knew that his brother would continue to offend him as often as we offend God in thought, word, and deed;—would he consider his repentance, though sincere, a sufficient ground of pardon? To make the case palpable, suppose that the offender should manifest an inability or imbecility which would certainly lead to a repetition of the offence;—would not the other, In forgiving him upon his repentance, think it right to require bonds and a surety, for his own personal defence? in this case, the law of self-defence, the natural law of immunity from violence or wrong, requires a bondsman

* "Be not deceived in this; it is not a transient sigh, or a light word, or a wish of *God forgive me*; no, nor the highest current of repentance, nor that which is the truest evidence of repentance, amendment; it is none of these that purify in the sight of God, and expiate wrath; they are all imperfect and stained in themselves, cannot stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise the former guilt of sin." ABP. LEIGHTON, On the words, "Elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

who shall stand between it and the offender. The law of God, in like manner, requires perfect obedience in us, or immunity from dishonor, if we are released from the strict punishment of every sin. Christ has effected that immunity by being made a curse for us, so that it is just for God to forgive a penitent, though still imperfect, in view of the propitiation which Christ has made for sin.

Instead, therefore, of giving us unsound conceptions of the divine government, the doctrine of forgiveness through a mediator, seems to me in accordance with the just feelings and practice of men. But you say, that the divine government and human justice are not analogous. I do not say that they are, but only that the necessity of a mediator between God and man, is compatible with the instinctive feelings and conduct of man.

Perhaps you would say, 'God can guard his government against the ill effect of repeated or continued sin of omission or commission in a penitent sinner; which man cannot do in the case of his own personal rights nor of human government.' Would not this be the same as saying that our repentance can make satisfaction to God, notwithstanding our continued unworthiness and delinquencies? Whatever may be said of the way of forgiveness through Christ, as irrational, such views of the law of God seem to us as irrational, as we think they are unscriptural. The love of God, if it were so accommodating and blind, would seem to us weak; we should see nothing of the judicial or regal character in God,—nothing but an overweening fondness, and a degree of lenity, which in a human father would only move contempt. But believing that the divine Saviour has made a sacrifice which God sets forth as a propitiation, we can understand how God can be just, and justify the penitent believer, even though the believer will remain imperfect in this world, and every day of his life come so far short of his duty as to deserve eternal punishment.

Your third argument to prove the popular notion of forgiveness, through the sacrifice of Christ, *irrational*, is,

"It introduces into the Divine administration a principle which is at variance with other principles acknowledged by all Christians to belong to it. This principle is, that some other consideration than the character of

the individual may determine his experience of the divine favor. But the regard in which he shall be held by his Maker must rest wholly on his moral deserts." p. 18.

This part of your tract, my dear sir, I think will be sufficiently answered by saying that, in our opinion, the Gospel brings clearly to view the principle, in God's treatment of sinners, of justification by faith. You say that nothing should determine the sinner's experience of the divine favor but his own conduct, that is, his obedience rendered, in and after repentance, to the law of God. The Bible tells us, "But now the righteousness of God *without the law* is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." We regard this passage, and others like it, as teaching that God has revealed a principle in his way of justifying men other than that of personal merit. "To him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."

But is this a substitute for personal goodness? "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid!" The sufferings and death of Christ we hold to be a provision for a sinner's justification and not an excuse from personal goodness. It is brought in to answer the demand which the law of God makes for perfect obedience, and so far from releasing the sinner from efforts after goodness, it practically *establishes the law* in his heart and conscience as the rule of his duty.

But you add, p. 18. "The imputation of the sinner's guilt to Christ contradicts our natural notions of justice." Isaiah was of a different opinion. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all." Peter said of Christ, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed." If divine justice had seized Christ, and had made him suffer for the guilty against his will, even this would not contradict our natural notions of justice more than some events of divine providence in which innocent persons, as we call them, (though none suffer beyond their deserts,) are made the prey of wickedness, or meet with calamity through another's fault. We know that these events are perfectly consistent with the goodness and justice of God. How, then, is the vol-

untary sacrifice of Christ repugnant to our natural notions of justice, when he said, "Sacrifices and burnt offerings and offerings for sin, thou wouldest not—but a body hast thou prepared me;—Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. By the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"?

But you say,

"The idea of satisfying the divine justice by any measure or kind of suffering borne by any one but the transgressor, is irreconcilable with the elements of justice so far as we know any thing of its nature." p. 19.

If this be so, we should bear in mind a remark in another part of your tract: "As God is the moral governor of this world we correct our ideas of justice and goodness and compassion by the examples furnished in his administration of the world's affairs." p. 26. Now we are expressly taught that God's *justice* is intimately concerned in the way of salvation by the sufferings of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood,—that He might be *just* and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

With regard to the common objection to the sufferings of an innocent being for the guilty, as violating our natural notions of justice, it is difficult, my dear sir, to see in what manner your own scheme reconciles the acknowledged sufferings of Christ with your ideas of justice. That Christ suffered beyond the experience of any other being, is commonly believed. That he was innocent,—*"holy, harmless, undefiled,"* is true. Why did he suffer? Not for his own sake, surely. Did he suffer to set us an example, or to confirm his testimony to man, or in any other way, for the benefit of our race? But where is the justice of subjecting an innocent being to shame and blood for the good of sinners? Cannot "our heavenly Father" save us without inflicting monstrous ignominy and excruciating torture upon his dear Son? How do you, my dear sir, reconcile this with your ideas of justice? We account for it by the declaration that "God laid on him the iniquities of us all." We agree with Caiaphas, the high priest, in those remarkable words, John xi. 49. "And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all;

nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the people of God that were scattered abroad."

Can you inform us, my dear sir, how "Jesus should die for that nation," on any principles of natural justice? If you say, The moral power of his sufferings and death justified his crucifixion, you at once admit the principle of vicarious suffering which you say is "irrational, unscriptural and pernicious." *

Your fourth objection to the doctrine of atonement as efficacious to procure pardon, is,

"It allows to this event (the death of Christ) a retrospective action." p. 20.

"If sin could not have been forgiven after the sacrifice on Calvary unless that sacrifice had been made, it could not have been forgiven previously except in virtue of that sacrifice. If there was an obstacle in the way of pardon, which only the blood of Jesus could remove, this obstacle must have existed from the beginning of the world. If the principles of the Divine government, or the nature of the Divine perfections, or the welfare of the universe forbade the pardon of the contrite, unless the Son of God was nailed to the cross, pardon must either have been withheld from the generations who preceded the birth of Jesus, or those among them who found forgiveness must have obtained it through an anticipation by the Divine Mind of the Saviour's death. One or the other of these suppositions is inevitable. The advocates of the doctrine under our notice choose the latter, and maintain that Abraham, Moses, David, and all who before the coming of Christ were forgiven for the sins of which they repented,

* Bishop Butler says, that many who object to the vicarious sufferings of Christ "forget that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every day's experience; and not seeing how the sufferings of Christ could contribute to the redemption of the world, unless by arbitrary and tyrannical will, they conclude his sufferings could not contribute to it in any other way." But he adds, "Let reason be kept to; and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up; but let not such poor creatures as we, go on objecting against an infinite scheme that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning." *Analogy*, Part ii. Chap. v.

owed their pardon to the reflex efficacy of his sufferings. Is this a rational faith? Does not reason remonstrate against it?" p. 20.

The principle of faith, which, certainly, is not "*irrational*," gives us abundant illustrations of the reflex influence of events. The flood had a reflex influence on Noah's condition a hundred and twenty years before it came. The expected coming of the Messiah had such an influence upon the Jewish people. The hope of the resurrection, and of acquittal at the last day, has a reflex influence upon the living. Now, if Christ made an atonement for sin, what is there "*irrational*" in the idea that the early inhabitants of the world were "*saved by hope*" of it, and by faith in it?

In this connection, as this is the close of that part of your tract which refers to the atonement as "*irrational*," and your next position is that it is "*unscriptural*," I will first introduce under this latter head, the testimony of Scripture to the reflex influence of the death of Christ. Your second position then, is, that

II. The doctrine of forgiveness through the death of Christ is "*unscriptural*."

The question which I am to consider is, Does the Scripture teach that the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ had a retrospective action?

The following passage seems to me clearly to teach this: Heb. ix. 15. "*And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*"

Again. We read, Gal. iii. 8, "*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham.*"

Again. Christ is called, "*the last Adam*," intimating a relation to the race of man as universal as that of our first parent.

The efficacy of ancient sacrifices is declared in scripture to be derived from their reference to the sacrifice of Christ.

We are told, that "*it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.*" Heb. x. 4. But we know that this blood *was* appointed and had effi-

cacy to this end. What, then, is the meaning of the above declaration? The blood of bulls and of goats *did* take away sin four thousand years! The meaning must be, this blood had no efficacy by itself, but only by its reference to other blood to be shed in the fulness of time. The ceremonial law is spoken of as a *shadow*. The atonement was coming, and threw its mighty shadow forward upon men. This shadow itself was an atoning ritual; thank offerings, and peace offerings were also in it, but its predominant characteristic was, that of propitiation; not gifts and offerings merely, as you say, p. 23. "But, in these sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." Heb. x. 3.*

The ancient patriarchs, prophets and kings, knew Christ, and believed on him as Redeemer. Christ himself on his way to Emmaus with the two disciples, "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." The text, of which this discourse was an illustration, was, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke, xxiv. 26, 27. After his resurrection, having referred his disciples to the words which he spake to them while he was yet with them, concerning the things written in the law of Moses, and of the Prophets, and of the Psalms, concerning him, He said,

* The testimony of Christian and Heathen writers fully establishes the expiatory and atoning influence of victims, before Christ. It is of no use to show that many, or even, as you say, most of the Jewish offerings were acts of praise. The ancient world, Jew and Gentile, used, also, atoning vicarious sacrifices. See OUTRAM, (*De Sacrificiis*) from whom the following quotations are translated: ORIGEN on Lev. i. says that "the placing the hand on the head of the bullock indicated the transfer of the sins of men to Christ. 'For he is the head of the body, the Church.'" THEODORET (*Quest. i. ad Levit.*) says, "The *hands* signify *actions*; for these, he offered the victim." HERODOTUS (in *Euterpe*) says, "The Egyptians use imprecations over the heads of victims, so that if any evil be impending over the worshippers, or Egypt, it may be diverted to the head of the sacrifice. Hence, no Egyptian tastes the head of any animal." PLUTARCH (*De Iside and Osirid.*) says, also, that with the Egyptians, "the head of the ex-crated victim was formerly thrown into the river, but now they give it to strangers." EUSEBIUS says, (*Demonstr. Evang. l. i. c. 10.*) "Forasmuch as pious men, before Moses, who lived with God, and were divinely enlightened, saw their need of some great remedy to expiate their deadly sins, they concluded that some expiation should be made to the Giver of existence and of the animal life, and since they had nothing of more worth and excellence than their own lives to offer before God, they sacrificed beasts instead of them, thus offering the lives of others, viz. of animals, instead of their own."

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Luke xxiv. 44, 46. So that the idea of a suffering Messiah was known to ancient saints.

Once more. In Rev. xiii. 8, the book of life, is called "the Book of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." We believe that this and similar passages, which will be mentioned presently, teach, that the moral government of the world opened with the use of the atonement, that is, the vicarious sufferings of Christ. Though Christ was not born till four thousand years after, God dealt with the race as though his blood had already been shed. We think that this appears from several passages of scripture.

"Who hath saved us and called us, not according to our works, but to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world was." 2 Tim. i. 9.

"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1 Pet. i. 18.

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised us in Christ, before the world began." Titus, i. 2.

I quote these passages, for the purpose, my dear sir, of asking you a question upon them, viz. Is it the object of these passages to teach that God originally promised, that, in four thousand years from the creation, he would forgive sin upon repentance? This is the only way of salvation which you recognize, and it was the whole object of Christ, you think, to explain and enforce this truth, that God would forgive and save a penitent sinner. If so, all these passages must refer to it. But will not every mind feel, that the solemn and august deliberation expressed in these passages, requires something more to warrant them than the mere fact, that a messenger was one day to come from God to republish his willingness to forgive sin upon repentance? Was this a new thing? How had God always forgiven sin, according to your scheme? Can any one believe that these impressive passages refer to the coming of one who was merely to republish that, which, as you think, the world knew and practised upon, in every case of penitence? And if his object was, also, a mere exemplary obedience, with what appro-

priateness could he be said to have been "*slain* from the foundation of the world"?

We believe that these passages refer to the incarnation of the Word "who was in the beginning with God and who was God," and to the "one sacrifice for sins," which he would offer. If this event was worthy, as we believe it was, of such deliberate and solemn annunciation, why may it not have reached as far back, when it occurred, as the appointment of God respecting it, reached forward? If it was great enough to throw a shadow out of eternity four thousand years into coming time, why could it not have thrown back its influence also to the beginning of time? Isaiah, at least, seems to have felt its influence. "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him, and by his stripes *we* are healed." Is. liii. 5.

The arguments which you proceed to offer in support of the position, that the doctrine of forgiveness through the death of Christ is "unscriptural," are

1. "*Its opposition to the general strain of scripture.* The Bible abounds with assurances of the placability of God. Almost every page contains, and many pages are written all over with, the evidences of his willingness to forgive the penitent." p. 20.

So far from being an argument against the doctrine in question, this general strain of scripture derives its greatest power from the fact, that "God loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Are these passages precious to you? We, my dear sir, have a confirmation of their truth, which, upon your scheme, you cannot feel, in the assurance that 'he that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, will, with him also freely give us all things.' If by giving up his own Son for us, be meant the humiliation, incarnation, and final offering of the Divine Word, what an argument have we for the placability of God beyond the mere testimony of a martyr! Were it not, my dear sir, for your misconception, that the atonement occurred to *make* the Most High placable, and you could believe with us, that it is the suggestion of infinite benevolence, you would see what force there is in the assurances referred to, beyond even your present impressions of them.

Your second argument, in showing the atonement to be unscriptural, is,

2. "*It is condemned by the language of particular passages.*"

The passages adduced are these :

"To Moses, Jehovah proclaimed himself as the Lord God, gracious, and merciful, long-suffering," &c.

"David celebrated the Lord as ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon him."

"Isaiah cried, Let the wicked forsake his way, &c. and let him turn to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him," &c.

"Ezekiel said, If the wicked will turn from his sins &c., he shall not die."

Our Lord said, "If ye forgive, &c., your heavenly Father will forgive you." And finally, the parable of the prodigal son is mentioned as a proof that full and free forgiveness will be granted upon repentance.

To make these passages serve the purpose of your argument, it would be necessary that you should first show that the forgiveness promised in them is irrespective of faith in a propitiation for sin. But not to dwell upon this—the passages here quoted are confirmed, instead of weakened, by the fact of an atonement.

In view of the gift of Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, we are able to make the most affecting appeals to men concerning the truth of these passages. We tell them that God so loved the world that, in order to remove every obstacle out of the way of his love, and that he might be just, he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him might not perish but have eternal life. Hence they may be assured, whenever they think of Christ, that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The question is frequently asked, why Christ did not bring to view the idea of atonement in the parable of the prodigal son? We might with equal propriety ask, why did not the woman who found a piece of silver, provide a sacrifice, so that she might consistently receive it again? Why did not the shepherd sacrifice one of the ninety and nine sheep, that he might consistently put the wanderer, whom he had brought back, into his fold? The thought is absurd. They were not cases in which propitiation would

have been suitable. Neither would it be suitable in receiving a penitent member of a family upon his return. The reason is, the influence of parental authority is fully restored, when a wicked child returns and wanders no more. Repentance and subsequent obedience, is "the end of the law for righteousness," in such a case; "the righteousness of the" parental "law,"—in other words, all which that law requires, "is fulfilled," by the perfect return of the offender. Not so with sinners in their return to God. Their subsequent obedience does not fulfil the requisitions of the law of God, and the only way in which the righteousness which the law of God requires, "is fulfilled in us," is, by God's "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and *for sin*." Rom. viii. 3, 4. Hence the case of the prodigal son and of a penitent sinner, are not entirely analogous. One point only was intended in that parable, viz.: The willingness of God to receive a penitent sinner. Atonement could not have been introduced into the similitude, and the parable be true to nature. It does not follow, however, that atonement is not necessary in order to be at peace with God, merely because in illustrating God's willingness to receive a penitent, Christ did not introduce the plan of human salvation into the story of a father's reception of a penitent child!

If the prodigal son had felt and acted on the principle of your tract, he would have returned with a sincere profession of being reformed, and would have sought admission straightway into his father's house, feeling that it would "violate our natural principles of justice," for his father to require any humiliation or suffering additional to repentance. But he craved atonement, and said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants."

You would prove the atonement to be unscriptural,

3dly. "*Because it applies false principles of interpretation to numerous texts and even to large portions of Scripture, and so wrests them from their true intent.* In the Old Testament it misconstrues the design of the Jewish sacrifices, and beholds in them types of the great sacrifice which was offered, centuries after, in the person of Christ. It is remarkable, how this notion of a typical value in the Jewish law, has infected the minds of Christians." p. 23.

It is not difficult to see how they caught this '*infection*.' Many parts of the New Testament are full of it.

The writings of Christians, in every age of the church, abound with the same thing, and it prevails now, without the least sign of abatement. Men are strangely possessed with the idea, that "Christ, our *passover*, was sacrificed for us;" that, "as Moses *lifted up the serpent* in the wilderness, even so was the Son of Man *lifted up*." They do not refrain from speaking of Christ as the *Lamb* of God; they are addicted "to the blood of sprinkling;" they think that we also have a great "*High Priest*," who hath entered for us within the vail.

"They have gone so far, even as to suppose, that sacrifices were originally instituted by God to prefigure the death of Christ, and that they were accepted by him on the ground of the relation which they bore to that remote event." p. 23.

And to prove this, they quote that passage in Hebrews, where, speaking of "sacrifices and offerings for sin," and of the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," it is said, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." Heb. x. 9. The things which Christ pointed out to his disciples "in Moses," "concerning Him," it has been generally supposed, by the Christian church, were foretokens, "that the Christ should suffer!" Luke xxiv. With the present version and canon of Scripture, it seems probable that Christians will continue to interpret the old Testament in the same manner.

Your last objection to the atonement is thus expressed :

III. *It remains for me to show, that the prevalent view of the atonement is pernicious*; by which I mean, that it is suited to injure the moral and religious characters of those, by whom it is embraced. I do not intend to point a sneer or a censure at its advocates, as if I thought them less moral or religious than others. But I must maintain, that their doctrine is suited to make them so, and that they neutralize its effect by virtually disbelieving it when it comes in contact with social duty. I wish to speak only of its legitimate influence, of its effect upon a mind which should give itself up to its power. This effect must be bad, prejudicial alike to devotion and virtue." p. 25.

Some will think that this passage, though couched in mild expressions, is not as modest as might have been expected;—and yet no one can feel offended by it, because the whole Christian church, in all ages, falls under its reprehension. The only concern which we have with the

quotation, is, to ascertain whether the tendency of the popular views of the atonement, is really pernicious.

You endeavor to prove this, by saying,

“In the first place, by unsettling and confusing our notions of the Divine government, it weakens the authority of that government over our minds and hearts and lives.” p. 25.

If you intend by this, that the government of God has less power over the hearts and lives of those who believe in the atonement, than of those who reject it; that the former, as a matter of fact, love and serve God less than the latter; that, in their reverence of God, their devotional feeling, and their general spirit of obedience, they are inferior to them, I would say, that a public discussion of the comparative piety of our respective denominations might not seem decorous, especially as men can observe for themselves, and draw their own inferences.

But if your argument be, that such views of the Divine government as are connected with a belief in the atonement are less suited to promote reverence for God, than your own views,—though we might still require the proof in the fruits of the two systems, we will, nevertheless, consider your reasoning.

The unworthy views of God and his government which you ascribe to a belief in the atonement are, in part, those which I have endeavored to show do not belong to our faith. We do not hold any views of God which represent him as indisposed to mercy, but rather that the plan of redemption is the fruit of his infinite benevolence, and that Christ and his sacrifice were appointed by the Father that he might save sinners, and yet “be just.” Rom. iii. 26.

If you should admit that we believe this, you would still, probably, say, that the principles of government upon which we represent mercy to be shown to man, dishonor God, and weaken our reverence for him. It seems to us that they glorify God and produce the highest reverence for him. If it would not be deemed invidious, I would say, with proper respect, that your own system appears to us injurious to the divine character in giving us disproportionate views of the paternal character of God. He has other attributes than those of a Father, and other feelings than those of paternal love. In the destruction of the

old world, of Sodom and Gomorrah, and at the Red Sea, and in all his great judgments, other feelings than those of children to a father are naturally excited in us. We think that you exaggerate the paternal character of God, by omitting the kingly and judicial manifestations of the Godhead.

While the paternal character of God is as much an object of faith with us as with you, and we believe nothing whatever inconsistent with the doctrine that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, we ascribe feelings to Him which his own word sets forth, but which we think your system suppresses, because it has no articles of faith to account for them. The Bible gives us views of the character of God as a moral governor and judge, which are seldom dwelt upon, if my impressions are correct, in Unitarian writings. We read much of "our heavenly Father," in them, but of those tremendous attributes which are manifested in the government of a wicked world, and of wicked and lost angels and men, we find comparatively nothing. God is chiefly represented to us, in those writings, as a mild and smiling Father, anxiously watching for the happiness of his children, and sometimes the feelings ascribed to him seem to us almost of a doting kind. The paternal character of God, is indeed, infinitely lovely ; and when we pray, it is an infinite privilege that we may say, Our Father who art in heaven.

But in the experience of such men as Job and David and Isaiah and Paul, and even of the beloved John, there are other feelings towards God, which it seems to me you would feel it difficult to approve, judging from your tract, if you should find them elsewhere than in the Bible. His jealousy, his avenging justice, the fear of holy men in looking upon God, their self abhorrence and sense of immeasurable vileness, before Him, their calm acquiescence in his anger against the wicked ; together with the representations of his future and everlasting wrath, do not appear in Unitarian writings as we think they do in the Bible. You dwell somewhat exclusively upon the goodness of our heavenly Father ; but when, to us, the temple of God is opened in heaven, there is seen, indeed, "the ark of his testament ;" but there are also "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquake, and great hail." We know that God is our Father ; but we also feel

that to us, as guilty creatures, he can be no other than a consuming fire, and that unless he had himself made a propitiation for our sins, to meet that instinct of awakened conscience which seeks for satisfaction to public justice in something foreign to the sinner, we never could approach him with peace. The incarnation of "the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God," and who "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," assures us not only that God will forgive sin; for miracles might convince us of this; but that it is consistent with the interests of the universe that our sins should be forgiven, since "God hath laid on him the iniquities of us all."

In what way this confuses our notions of the Divine government, or is derogatory to the Divine character, we are at a loss to conceive.

Again, You think that

"The common language respecting the atonement tends to confound our notions of morality. Any doctrine that supposes the justice of God to have been bribed by equivalents or substitutes, must affect our estimate of the justice which should be observed between man and man." p. 26.

How could you seriously think that this is a just exhibition of our belief? I trust that you would not designedly misrepresent it.

The point of your argument is,

"If God has forgiven me only from regard to another's interference, why shall I freely forgive my brother? If I regard the conduct of Heaven as a rule for human actions, I must wait till some third person shall offer an inducement sufficient to draw forth my forgiveness towards my fellow creature." p. 27.

You make the impression by these words that we consider God as unwilling to receive a prayer or proposal from man till Christ persuaded him by the offer of his blood; and then that the incensed Deity yielded to the importunity of Christ, and consented that man should live, on condition that Christ should make entire satisfaction to his wrathful anger. This is the picture of a Heathen deity. Your question, Why should I freely forgive my brother, if God has forgiven me only from regard to another's interference, presents the Supreme Being in a most obnoxious manner.

To place the subject in its *proper* light, you should imagine a case in which you had made provision to bring back an offending individual by employing a third person to adjust the difficulty. Are not cases constantly occurring in which love prompts to mediatorial measures in order to remove obstacles from the way of an offender's return? Our doctrine is, that God so loved the world, that he appointed the incarnate Word, to remove by his sufferings and death every difficulty from the way of the just exercise of mercy towards man. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the Saviour of the World."

You represent it, however, as parallel to your waiting for some third person to offer an inducement sufficient to draw forth your forgiveness towards your fellow sinner, and then you say,

"These I think are not unfair examples of the manner in which the common doctrine of the atonement would affect the interests of morality." p. 27.

My dear Sir, they are exceedingly unfair. We do not believe, none of us have ever taught, that God waited to be favorably disposed towards man by Christ. God himself provided the way of salvation by a Redeemer from his great love wherewith he loved us. He who should treat an offending brother as we believe God has treated us in the matter of the atonement, would give the highest possible proof of his love towards the offender, and of his desire to be at peace with him.

But now, perhaps, the phraseology of Calvin and Watts will occur to your mind, and you will say, If I loved my brother as you represent God to have loved us, would it be just to say that the mediator whom I employed, "pacified me," "assuaged my wrath," "reconciled me," "calmed my frowning face?" No; and for this reason:—they would be disproportionate to any feelings of disapprobation which any mortal should have towards a sinner. But the great God is represented to us, at the same time that he loves man, as "angry with the wicked every day." "For our God is a consuming fire." "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Grant, now, that by the sufferings and death of Christ, God provided a way for the forgiveness and restora-

tion of man,—is it more than the subject will warrant, to speak of Christ as having assuaged, pacified, calmed, the Divine wrath? or as having sprinkled the burning throne with his blood? All these expressions are consistent in the minds of those who use them with the feeling that God sent his Son to be, in the way of a sacrifice, the Saviour of the world.

How, then, does the doctrine of the atonement, as we teach it, lead to injurious principles of intercourse between man and man? So far from teaching them to refrain from acts of reconciliation, till a third person interposes, if they followed its example, they would do any thing and every thing which is proper in removing obstacles from the way of reconciliation, and this, too, even when the alienated party is an enemy. This we understand to have been the conduct of God towards us, and the nature of the exhortation drawn from it in the following passage, is certainly very much in point: “Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*” If, then, you should believe in the atonement, and yet in a case of offence between yourself and another individual you should wait for a third person to interpose, you would act contrary to the example of your faith. But if you should employ a third person to remove legal, or social, or personal difficulties, so that you could lawfully and properly manifest your love to the individual, and send him messages of reconciliation, you would, in some measure, exemplify what we understand as one great motive of the atonement.

But there is one other way in which you seem to think the doctrine of atonement is suited to injure morals.

“So long as the opinion is entertained, that something else than righteousness, or fidelity to every duty of life, is a means of obtaining the Divine favor, the authority of righteousness will be impaired.” p. 27.

This objection to the doctrine of justification by grace, has, at least, one merit, that of antiquity. For it seems like the objection which Paul met and answered, when he said, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law.” You are pleased to intimate, that

"The Antinomian heresy is the natural, though rank, growth of the tree, whose roots are planted in this soil." p. 27.

No doubt the wickedness of man may pervert the truth of God ; but Paul shall again answer the objection : " If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we also are found sinners, is Christ therefore the minister of sin ? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." Salvation by grace, justification by faith, without works, is, therefore, in the opinion of the Apostle, true, though some should abuse it to licentiousness. But the natural effect of it, instead of an impaired sense of accountability, as you think, is, to "establish the law" of God as our rule of conduct.

A third pernicious effect of the doctrine of atonement in your view, is,

"It changes the relative position which Christ and God should hold in human regard, exalting the Savior and depressing the Father." p. 27.

To establish this, you again bring to view the familiar misrepresentation, that

"It teaches that the Father was persuaded or enabled (it is no matter which word we take) to exercise his mercy by the interposition of his Son. How is it possible, that where these lessons are really believed, the Son should not be the object of a more tender remembrance and a more fervent gratitude than the Father ? It is not possible Christ is regarded with a deeper love than God. Faith delights to celebrate his part in the redemption of the world, and humble penitence clings to his feet. While He, whose love sent the Redeemer into the world, is regarded as a distant, if not doubtful friend, or is approached with timid distrust. Is not this most disastrous ? Are there not many hymns in popular use which we cannot read without being pained (I will not say, shocked) by the tone of sentiment respecting him, who 'stood between his Father's curse and us ?'"

I intend no comparison between these remarks and Jewish prejudices, when I say, that they bring to mind the apparent jealousy and zeal for God which influenced the Jews in opposing the claims of Christ. The words of the Saviour will not, in our opinion, be inappropriate as a reply to your objections : " If God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from the Father : neither came I of myself, but he sent me."

No words could better express the reason why the ardent and impassioned feelings towards Christ, in evangelical hymns and prayers, and in the written meditations of Christians in all ages of the world, are perfectly consistent with supreme love to God. Christ seems to us, in his love, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image" of his person, and in Him as our Saviour, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." You say, "it is not possible, that the Son should not be the subject of more tender remembrance and more fervent gratitude than the Father." The feelings which the sufferings of Christ in our behalf, excite, are, in the nature of things, different in kind from those which we have towards the Father, but there is nothing in them which derogates from equal love to God. Our feelings towards the Son, we are persuaded, do not exceed that which is revealed to us as "the Father's will," viz.: "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father."

As an illustration of the feelings which the most high-toned and severely Calvinistic divines have had towards God, I quote a passage from Jonathan Edwards's account of his conversion. Though his theological views were such, that he could write the well known sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," he says,

"The first instance, that I remember of that sort of inward sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was, on reading those words, 1 Tim. i. 17. 'Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen.' As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was, as it were, diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be, as it were, swallowed up in him forever!"

"After this," he continues, "my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered: there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, and trees; in the water, and all nature. And scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me, as thunder and lightning; formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror, when I saw a thunder storm rising: but now, on

the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunder storm; and used to take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself, in order to view the clouds and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God."

But he was by no means deficient in love to Christ, notwithstanding these feelings towards the Father. He says,

"Once as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse, in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view, that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as mediator between God and man. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception, which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time, in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be—full of Christ alone; to love him with a pure and holy love; to trust in him, to live upon him. I have several other times had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the same effects."

I may as well add one more sentence, to complete the view of his feelings towards God.

"I have many times had a sense of the glory of the third person in the Trinity, in his office as sanctifier, in his holy operations, communicating divine light and life to the soul."—*Edwards's Works*, i.

We seldom meet, even in the writings of those who entertain the most exalted views of "the goodness of our Heavenly Father," an experience which seems more in accordance with the apostolic benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

I have been induced to quote as fully as I have done, from Calvin, Watts, and Edwards, in this Letter, because it seems desirable, that those who think it their duty to warn others against the pernicious tendency of Orthodoxy, should be acquainted with the real views and feelings of its standard writers.

You speak of "hymns in popular use" which you cannot read without being "pained, not to say, shocked, by the tone of sentiment concerning Him who 'stood between his Father's curse and us.'" I would respectfully inquire if the following song be one of them?—for most of our hymns to Christ are based upon it:

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

"Faith," here, "delights to celebrate his part in the redemption of the world, and humble penitence clings to his feet."

Your representations of our "insensibility to the claims which the infinite Father has on our gratitude, as He who has rescued us from guilt and received us into the arms of his mercy," are not warranted by fact. These representations proceed from your apparent inability to reconcile what is said of God's wrath, and of his curse abiding on us, and of the removal of it by Christ, with the original, unpurchased love of God to man. Are not these two things equally set forth in Scripture? Are we not, by nature, children of wrath? Eph. ii. 2. And has not "God, who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith he loved us, quickened us together with Christ"? "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Is not the curse of the law, the Father's curse? If Christ "redeemed us from it," did he not, in some sense, "stand between his father's curse and us?"

But perhaps I cannot better illustrate the feelings of Orthodox Christians towards God and Christ, as associated in redemption, than by selecting a passage from the writings of some one of them. There are special reasons which guide my choice of the following passage, which is an extract from the WILL of JOHN CALVIN.

"First, I give thanks to God, that taking pity on me, whom he hath created and placed in this world, he hath delivered me out of the thick darkness of idolatry into which I was plunged; and hath brought me into the light of His gospel, and made me a partaker of the doctrine of salvation, whereof I was most unworthy: And he hath not only gently and graciously borne with my faults and sins, for which I deserved to be rejected of him, and cast out, but hath vouchsafed to use my labors in preaching and publishing the truth of his gospel. And I declare it is my wish and intention to continue in the same faith and religion, having no other hope or refuge but in his gratuitous adoption of me, upon which is founded all my salvation: embracing the grace which he has given me in Jesus Christ, and accepting the merit of his death and passion, that so all my sins may be buried; and beseeching him so to wash and cleanse me with the blood of that great Redeemer which was shed for all poor sinners, that in his image I may appear before his face. So that my only refuge is, that He being the Father of mercy I trust he will be and appear the Father of so miserable a sinner."—*Mackenzie's Memoir of Calvin.*

In connection with this, let us consider your last objection to the atonement.

"And now, finally, the injurious effect of the current doctrine of the atonement is seen in removing the reliance of the Christian from the mercy of God, its only safe resting place, to the merits or mediation of Christ."

The above extract from Calvin is a sufficient reply to this objection. "The merits of Christ" *are* "the mercy of God." But you say,

"The conscience-stricken sinner makes Christ his refuge, as if the mercy of God were not large enough to overshadow him. The humble disciple casts himself upon the sacrifice of Christ, as if its whole value did not consist in the persuasion which it utters to submit the soul to God. The dying believer leans on the "merits of Christ," as he has been taught to style services which are sadly misrepresented by such a term;—and when pointed to the mercy of God, feebly reiterates that he trusts in his Saviour. To me language of this kind is indescribably painful. The merits of Christ! where could such language have been learned? Not from the Bible, where it never appears. Not from the teaching of Christ, who never sanctioned its use. Trust in the Saviour! Why not trust in God?"

The only answer which we can make to this passage is in a flood of tears,—tears of affectionate concern for one, to whom "our Gospel" seems to be "hid;"—and unaffected grief, that the only foundation of our hope, and, as we consider it, "the hope of every creature under heaven," should thus be a stumbling-block and foolishness. One ray of light could show you that "the mercy of God" and "the merits of Christ" are identical. It would afford us extreme pleasure to convince you that our love to God, confidence in Him, nearness of access to Him, our sense of peace with Him and our communion and fellowship with Him, are all in consequence of trusting in the Saviour's righteousness and death. Every evangelical believer will tell you that he never had one emotion of true love to God till he had put his trust in the Lord Jesus as appointed by the Father to be the propitiation for our sins. All who truly believe in the atonement of Christ in the sense in which I have endeavored to explain it, and amongst them many, very many, who once believed otherwise, will testify that they had no spiritual knowledge of God till they complied with the way of salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Now this method of salvation seems to you inconsistent

with the character of God. To us, it is the "brightness of the Father's glory," and the knowledge of it, is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." To you, it seems an expedient employed by a foreign influence to move, "persuade, or enable" the Father, contrary to his original disposition, to save men. To us, it is "his own purpose and grace," proceeding from infinite compassion, and constituting the highest proof of the love of God to man. To you, it seems to derogate from the love which is due to the Father; but it is the only method by which we were brought, when we were enemies, to be reconciled to God. We would that you and we "may comprehend with all saints what is the height and depth and length and breadth, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Permit me to refer again to your remarks upon the feelings and expressions of dying Christians with regard to Christ. You are aware that from the time of the martyr Stephen no single expression has constituted the last words of so many Christian believers as this: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Acts vii. 59. But "why not trust in God?" This expression is not inconsistent with the highest trust in God. For Jesus Christ is, to us, "God manifest in the flesh," God approaching us with human sympathies, God our Redeemer. God is thus brought to a level with our wants and weakness, and while the human nature of Christ is prominent in the impression made upon our minds, we still feel that "he that hath seen" him hath "seen the Father." In the hour of death, the assurance that the Infinite God is our Father, cannot *always* hide from the soul its numberless, aggravated sins, nor of itself give assurance of pardon. With a full belief, however, of the Divine mercy, the soul of the Christian, as a general fact, turns instinctively to the Saviour who is the appointed instrument and mediator of that mercy, and so far from derogating from the honor due to the Father, this provision to meet the wants of our nature seems to us the highest possible proof of the love of God to man.

It has been observed by some who were eminently practical men, conversant with all classes of society, that persons in extreme peril are apt to call on the name of

Christ. This brings to mind the fact, which is credibly related, that Voltaire, in his last moments, implored the help of Christ; and also the well known circumstance, that Thomas Paine, when dying said, "Lord, help me; Jesus Christ, help me." The history of the Christian church affords abundant illustrations of application to Christ in the dying hour. It is certainly a striking fact that the dying Stephen should have commended his departing soul to Jesus Christ: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Your question upon this point is pertinent to his case: "Why not trust in God?" Surely, dear sir, you would not say, "To me, language of *this* kind is indescribably painful." Yet such is your expression; and to account for it, knowing that you are not ignorant how the first Christian martyr died, is difficult. The case of Stephen is followed by a multitude which no man can number. Memoirs and obituaries are constantly bringing the same thing to view. Remarkable cases of it occurred in the early history of the church. IGNATIUS, of Antioch, was thrown to lions in the Roman amphitheatre, and on his way addressed his prayer to the Son of God. AUGUSTINE said, Come, Lord Jesus. JOHN HUSS, the Bohemian martyr, sung a hymn amidst the flames, and at the end of it, cried out, Lord Jesus, thou Son of the living God, have mercy on me,—and immediately fell and expired. JOHN KNOX when dying said, Come, Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit. LAMBERT, the martyr, said, None but Christ! None but Christ! BRADFORD and CRANMER cried, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. CLAUDE said, Our Lord Jesus Christ is my only righteousness.

It is impossible to conceive how it is that so many, in the dying hour, that honest hour, when party, and creeds, and theories give place to the utterance of the inmost soul, commit themselves thus in prayer to Christ, unless they feel that "the man Christ Jesus" is, also, divine. There is something in Christ which seems to invite familiar confidence, and at the same time, makes the dying believer feel that he is trusting in his God, while he reposes this confidence in the Saviour.

We have heard of cases in which other systems have been renounced in the dying hour;—but *where is the instance in which an individual, who intelligently and*

practically trusted in a Divine and atoning Saviour, renounced his reliance upon him in the closing scene of life?

It is also an interesting fact that those who change the ground of their hope in their last hours, most frequently change it for this "tried stone," the vicarious sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something in the expressions "Lamb of God," "propitiation," "sufferings and death," "blood of Christ," "wounded for our transgressions," "that God might be just and justify him that believeth in Jesus," which seems to accord with the wants of the dying. Many who in health are careless and self-ignorant, and self-sufficient, and who say, spiritually, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," feel, as they contemplate their expected meeting with God, that they are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; and resort to the "righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ."

The plan of justifying a penitent sinner for simply trusting in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, seems to be expressed in these words: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Rom. iv. 5. You say, however,

"I build my hope on the free mercy of God, and if that foundation fail, I perish, but the universe perishes with me." p. 29.

If you mean by "the free mercy of God," that he is infinitely willing to forgive sin, we are agreed; but if you mean by it, mercy, without the condition of believing on the sacrifice of Christ, you and I may indeed perish in rejecting it, but the universe will not perish with us. The throne of the universe is "the throne of God *and of the Lamb*;" (Rev. xxii. 1, 3.) a multitude which no man can number have already "washed their robes and made them white in his blood," and he is still "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

I come now to the closing paragraph of your tract.

"I have thus presented several grounds of dissent from the popular doctrine of the atonement, and have endeavored to show that while it is condemned by reason, and contradicted by Scripture, it is fruitful of evils that every one must lament.

rounded by those who were misled by us to their ruin, must be a consummation of we unequalled in the experience of other souls. If your sentiments are correct and we are wrong, even then, we, upon your system, are safe ; but if "the doctrine of the Christian church," as you call the atonement, is right, what will become of those who reject it ?

If any thing which has now been said shall tend to repel you from "the doctrine of the Christian church," or from embracing what we hold to be essential to salvation, I shall exceedingly regret it. For the object of this letter is to correct the misunderstanding of Orthodox views which pervades your tract, and also to show that they are rational, scriptural, and profitable for men ; with the hope that you and others may be led to reconsider your opinions respecting them. If you should henceforth, build the faith which you have labored to destroy, and join the multitudes in the Christian church who have lived and died in support and defence of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, you will occasion wide-spread joy on earth, and, I doubt not, amongst the redeemed.

Until this shall be the case, (and may it soon be !) one thing is certain : It cannot be said by any who agree with you, that there is not much difference between their views, and those of the Orthodox persuasion. Our views of atonement are to you, "irrational, unscriptural and pernicious ;" to us, they are the very life blood of religion, and the atonement of Christ is, with us, essential to salvation. "You have felt it to be your duty to "renounce and expose it." Let this, then, be fully understood. The consequence shall not be, on our part, debate, strife, hatred, and repulsive conduct towards you, but a solemn and steadfast exhibition of the essential and vital difference there is between us, and efforts, in a Christian spirit, to induce, on your part, an accordance with what we hold to be necessary to peace with God, and to admission amongst the redeemed. So that notwithstanding the total difference there is between us on the most important of all subjects, I shall ever be happy to regard myself, as,

Dear Sir, your friend and servant, for Jesus' sake,

NEHEMIAH ADAMS.

Boston, May 21st, 1840.

